

Fact Sheet:

Christian Churches and Immigration: Integration and Identity

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Innovation Funding Project, 2013-2014

Project Description and Goals:

The purpose of this study was to examine the response of Christian churches to the increasingly diverse immigrant reality in their communities.

The team proposed to study Catholic and Protestant churches in one large (Vancouver), medium (Halifax) and small (Moncton) metropolitan area in Canada. First, they identified and studied at least three congregations (one from each tradition: mainline Protestant, evangelical Protestant, Catholic) that have successful and innovative immigrant services. Triangulation of methods (interviews, participant observation, and documents analysis) was used for each case study. Interviews included both congregational leaders and recent immigrants involved in the congregation or congregational service. The effect of immigration on religious affiliation, congregational involvement and religious identity was examined. Second, they completed at least six focus-group interviews (each group will include 6-12 participants purposively sampled for diversity in denominational affiliation, immigrant/non-immigrant status, gender, age, and congregation size), two in each city. Focus group participants were leaders of congregations active in immigrant settlement.

Methodology:

- a) Interviews – focus groups and face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants in Moncton/Halifax and Vancouver.
- b) Site visits- case studies of three congregations (Pentecostal, Catholic, and historically Black Baptist) were completed in Halifax/Moncton.

Student Involvement:

- Alisha Maskery, Crandall University
- Alida Oegema, Trinity Western University
- Jennifer Adkins, University of British Columbia

Results:

- a) Three focus group interviews with church leaders involved in immigrant settlement, one in each of Halifax (8 participants), Moncton (4 participants) and Shediac (six participants). Participants included Baptist, Catholic, Salvation Army, Anglican, United, Lutheran, Wesleyan, Presbyterian, and Pentecostal leaders.
- b) In addition to the focus groups, face-to-face individual interviews with key informants included nine church leaders in Halifax, five in Moncton, and two in Shediac.
- c) Six recent immigrants from four different churches were interviewed regarding their experience as immigrants and the church support they received (two Baptist churches, one Pentecostal and one Catholic Church).
- d) Key informant interviews with individuals working with new immigrants in Vancouver including representatives from Baptist, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Mennonite Brethren churches.

- e) Site visit to Kinbrace Refugee, Housing and Support program in Vancouver to learn more about the various programs, speak with Executive Director, and observer.
- f) Site visit to Walnut Grove Lutheran Church, Vancouver, to learn about the specific details involving a case of political sanctuary with the congregation housing someone facing deportation.
- g) Literature search conducted on various aspects of immigrant settlement and congregations, sanctuary, and refugees.

Dissemination:

- **Reimer, Sam.** 2014. “The Immigrant Settlement Work of Christian Churches in Atlantic Canada,” *The Canadian Society for the Study of Religion Annual Meeting*, Brock University, 24-27 May.
- **Reimer, Sam** and Alisha Maskery. “Site Reports: Halifax, Moncton and Shediac.” Online report as part of the Role of Churches in Immigrant Settlement and Integration Research Project. <http://www.communitybasedresearch.ca/resources/659/FINAL%20-%20Maritime%20Summary%20Sept%202014.pdf>.
- **Reimer, Sam** and Richard Janzen. 2015. “How to love the foreigner among you: Immigrants, refugees and Christian churches.” *Mennonite Brethren Herald* August.
- **Reimer, Sam**, Richard Janzen, Mark Chapman, James Watson and **Michael Wilkinson.** 2016. “Christian Churches and Immigrant Support in Canada: An Organizational Ecology Perspective.” *Review of Religious Research*.
- **Wilkinson, Michael.** 2014. “Canadian Christian Churches and Immigrant Support.” Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Annual Meeting. Indianapolis, IN. Oct. 31-Nov. 2, 2014.
- **Wilkinson, Michael.** 2014. “The Role of Churches in Immigrant Settlement and Integration: The Case of Refugees in Vancouver, BC,” *Canadian Society for the Study of Religion Annual Meeting*, Brock University, 24-27 May.
- **Wilkinson, Michael**, Jennifer Adkins, and Alida Oedema. 2014. “Site Report: Vancouver.” <http://www.communitybasedresearch.ca/resources/659/Site%20Report%20-%20Vancouver%20Feb%2009,%202015.pdf>
- **Wilkinson, Michael.** 2015. “What’s a Local Picture? The Role of Churches in Vancouver.” National Metropolis Conference in Partnership with the Association of Canadian Studies.” Vancouver, BC, March 26, 2015.